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ABSTRACT

Opportunities Unlimited is a State-wide program to provide adult basic education (ABE) and training for Indians on Minnesota reservations and in Indian communities. An administrative center in Bemidji serves communities on the Red Lake, White Earth, and Leech Lake Reservations, and a Duluth center provides ABE and training for communities on the Grand Portage, Nett Lake, Fond du Lac, and Mille Lacs Reservations. The program is directed toward providing basic skills, communication skills and information for effective functioning in society, individualized instruction based on immediate need, and increased employment potential. Community instructional aides were responsible for the initial community contacts and organization of the classes. The most frequently requested courses were driver education and ABE in preparation for the high school equivalency test. During the three-year program, 375 adults passed the high school equivalency test, and 745 adults passed their driver's test. Three hundred people were unemployed before taking the high school equivalency test compared to 26 unemployed after passing the test. Courses in Anishinabe (Chippewa and Ojibway languages) were not generally successful due to a lack of experienced instructors and materials. Child care and transportation arrangements were often necessary for student participation. (EA)

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OPPORTUNITIES UNLIMITED MINNESOTA INDIANS

ADULT BASIC EDUCATION

Narrative and Statistical Evaluation

THIRD YEAR 1971 - 1972

With a Review of the First and Second Years

PROJECT FUNDED UNDER

Section 309 of the Adult Education Act of 1965

Public Law 89--750

SUBMITTED TO WILL ANTELL

Project Administrator

MINNESOTA DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION

FROM

GERALD VIZENOR

July 1972

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U.S. DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH, EDUCATION & WELFARE
NATIONAL INSTITUTE OF EDUCATION

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OPPORTUNITIES UNLIMITED MINNESOTA INDIANS

ADULT BASIC EDUCATION

I INTRODUCTION

The Opportunities Unlimited Minnesota Indians -- Adult Basic Education, funded under Section 309 of the Adult Education Act of 1966, Public Law 89-750, is a state-wide program designed and administrated by the Minnesota Department of Education to provide basic education and training for indian adults on reservations and in indian communities throughout the state.

The program has administrative centers in Duluth and Bemidji, Minnesota, and in Minneapolis to serve indian adults living in the urban center.

The administrative center in Bemidji serves communities on the Red Lake, White Earth and Leech Lake Reservations, while the center in Duluth has provided basic education and training for indian adults living in communities on the Grand Portage, Nett Lake, Fond du Lac and Mille Lacs Reservations.

This evaluation and report is prepared for Will Antell, Project Director and Administrator of the Indian Section, Minnesota Department of Education, with the assistance of William Lawrence, director of the Adult Basic Indian Education center in Bemidji.

Factual and narrative information appearing in this evaluation and report was obtained from official reports submitted by community aides and participants, and from personal interviews with participants, teachers, and community aides, in communities on the reservations where adult basic programs were offered.

II ABSTRACT OF THE ORIGINAL PROPOSAL

This project is an essential component of the Family Education Approach for Minnesota Indians, which represents the cooperative effort of the indian community and educational leaders to provide effective and meaningful educational programs for indian people in the urban center and on reservations.

For more than a century there has been a need to offer education programs for indian adults designed by indian people. This experimental Adult Basic Education Program is offered to the indian community and designed by those who participate in it.

More than sixty-five percent of the young indian people who start public school never graduate. This program meets the needs of indian people who have not graduated from high school. Through evening classes indian participants may complete the high equivalency test. These classes are designed by indian people and offered in the indian community.

But the indirect, long range benefits of traditional adult education programs have little appeal for the indian whose immediate needs in health, employment, food, and housing are not met. These needs can be met through cooperation and involvement of other agencies, while preparation for better opportunities in the future will be made possible through educational growth.

The results of the Adult Basic Indian Education program will provide new directions for all indian education programs. In addition the project will serve as a model for other states with substantial indian populations.

III MAJOR OBJECTIVES OF THE PROGRAM

1. To provide basic skills in reading, writing and arithmetic.
2. To assist indian adults in acquiring communication skills, knowledge and information necessary to function effectively in either an urban or rural society.
3. To provide an individualized instructional program based upon the immediate needs of indian adults.
4. To provide a broad spectrum of services and human development to complement the basic educational skills through the involvement and participation of local, state and private agencies, institutions and organizations.
5. To improve employment potential for indian adults taking part in the program.
6. To provide the basic educational skills which will enable indian adults to work more effectively and consequently, increase their earning power.

IV FUNCTIONAL DESCRIPTION OF THE PROGRAM

Before the Adult Basic Education program, indian adults interested in continuing their education and training could only attend programs offered in educational institutions off the reservation. Offering courses on the reservation in indian communities has increased participation.

Negative social and cultural attitudes toward indian people in educational institutions of the dominant society has discouraged many indian people from attending school. Transportation to special programs outside the reservation community has also caused problems.

Seasonal weather conditions and distances have also discouraged indian people from attending courses offered off the reservation. Many indian parents have also had problems obtaining and paying for child care services.

To meet these special problems of indian adults who wish to continue their education and training the Adult Basic Education program was created for indian people on the reservation.

Community Instructional Aides were employed under contract the first and second year of the program to work in the reservation communities where they lived. During the third year of the program the Aides were hired as state employees for the program. The Aides contacted adults in the reservation community to determine what special educational programs and training they desired. Many reservation indian adults requested programs in driver education, adult basic preparation for the high school equivalency test, training in business machines operation and secretarial skills, small engine repair, and programs in anishinabe (chippewa and ojibway in the language of the dominant society) language, social, and material culture.

The community aides were responsible for initial contacts in the community and the organization of the classes, meeting places and the recommendation of a resident instructor for the course. The aides also provide transportation in many communities.

Classes in the reservation communities were often held in churches or tribal buildings at least once a week. Classes in small engine repair and other classes requiring the use of special instructional materials and equipment were held both in the community and in the nearest facility off the reservation where special equipment was available.

The community aides made arrangements for driver training and

checked with each participant for special transportation and child care needs. In many situations the aides transported participants to and from classes in the community.

The participants communicated their requests for special courses to the aides who were all residents of the communities in which they were contracted to work. The aides in turn reported their progress and course requests to the director of each administrative center. At regular intervals all of the aides attended special meetings at the administrative center.

The aides submitted regular work reports and statistics on home contacts and participation in courses. In almost every case the aides worked for more hours than they were compensated for by contract.

V REVIEW OF THE FIRST YEAR 1969 - 1970

Through funds available under the Highway Safety Act, Public Law 89-564, indian communities were able to participate in adult driver education safety programs.

On three reservations -- Red Lake, White Earth, and Leech Lake -- driver education classes were organized. Arrangements were made with an automobile dealer in Bemidji to use new automobiles in driver education in indian communities on the reservation.

A secondary success of the driver education program was the trust and respect among the participants for other courses in the program.

In almost every community participants requested courses in anishinabe language and culture. More than six hundred homes were visited on three reservations -- White Earth, Leech Lake and Red Lake -- in the first few months of the program to determine what courses were of interest.

The most frequently requested course was driver education and adult basic education in preparation for the high school equivalency test. More than five-hundred people on three reservations participated in adult basic education courses during the first year of the program.

VI REVIEW OF THE SECOND YEAR OF THE PROGRAM 1970 - 1971

The Adult Basic Indian Education program conducted classes in more than twenty-five communities in the state. During an average week about a thousand indian adults participated in classes offered by the program.

In the written evaluation of the first year of the program it was reported that "each adult who enrolled in classes was given a test to give our staff a good indication of their achievement level.

"The revised edition of the WRAT (Wide Range Achievement Test) was used as this seemed to present less of a threat than the others . . . We learned that the average grade level achievement of all adults was the sixth grade . . . We found that many of them were ready for the high school equivalency test following a few weeks of refresher classes in language, mathematics and reading."

The most popular courses in the program, based on the total number of participants registered, were beadwork and anishinabe language. The next largest number of participants was in driver training and basic education.

The social benefits of many courses should be emphasized. For example, many adults who first attended classes in indian culture learned about other courses in the program. Many individuals were taking more than one course offered in the program.

People coming together for any reason in small communities on the reservation exchange information about adult basic education. The social exchange has been positive and has caused an increase in enrollment in other courses.

VII NUMERICAL SUMMARY -- THIRD YEAR 1971 - 197_

BEMIDJI ADMINISTRATIVE CENTER

Total number of persons who have completed and passed the high school equivalency test through the Adult Basic Indian Education program on the Red Lake, White Earth and Leech Lake Reservations.

COMPLETED HIGH SCHOOL EQUIVALENCY

Program Year	Male	Female	Total
First year 1969 - 1970	15	44	59
Second year 1970 - 1971	61	146	207
Third year 1971 - 1972	58	51	109
THREE YEAR TOTALS	134	241	375

BEMIDJI ADMINISTRATIVE CENTER

Total number of persons who have completed driver training and who have received a drivers permit or who have passed the driver test for a license through the Adult Basic Indian Education program on the Red Lake, White Earth and Leech Lake Reservations

RECEIVED DRIVER PERMIT AND PASSED DRIVER TEST FOR LICENSE

Program Year	Permit	License
First year 1969 - 1970	184	347
Second year 1970 - 1971	377	344
Third year 1971 - 1972	166	154
THREE YEAR TOTALS	727	745

BEMIDJI ADMINISTRATIVE CENTER

1971 - 1972

Program evaluation study of participants in the Adult Basic Indian Education program who have completed and passed the high school equivalency test. Summary of a questionnaire answered af er passing the high school equivalency test.

EVALUATION QUESTION	TOTAL NUMBER
Unemployed before passing test	300
Unemployed after passing test	26
New job after passing test	120
Salary increase after passing test	22
Promotion after passing test	54
Entered military service	7
Attending college after passing test	56
Attending vocation school after passing test	24

VIII STATISTICAL COMPARISON

At the Bemidji Administrative Center the second year of the program was the most successful in terms of numbers of participants in the program. During the third year the staff was reduced and as a result the number of participants served in the program was also reduced.

For example, during the second year of the program 207 participants passed the high school equivalency test, compared to 109 during the third year. The total number of participants who completed driver training and passed the driver license test also decreased from 344 during the second year to 154 during the third year.

The decreases are not only explained by the fact that funding and

staff for the program was reduced, but also because most participants interested in taking the high school equivalency test did so during the second year of the program.

The first year was an introduction to the program and what was possible on the reservation. By the second year most indian people who were interested in the high school equivalency were studying for the test. During the third year of the program interest leveled off and is expected to remain about the same in the future.

Three-hundred people were unemployed before taking the high school equivalency test -- based on statistics for the total three years -- compared to only twenty-six unemployed of those who had completed and passed the test.

Fifty-six persons who passed the high school equivalency test are now studying in college. This school year there are about two-hundred indian students attending Bemidji State College. It could be assumed that the total would be smaller if the Adult Basic Indian Education program did not offer instruction for the high school equivalency test.

IX CONCLUSION AND NARRATIVE EVALUATION

In the second year of the program several participants were concerned that the Adult Basic Indian Education program was not reaching the people on the reservations who needed the program the most. The problem, as stated by several participants, was that more community aides were needed to make more personal visits and encourage more people to attend special classes.

During the third year of the program the staff was reduced because of budget reductions. What several participants stated last year about

needing more community aides was an evaluation more commonly heard this year.

On the White Earth, Leech Lake, Red Lake and other reservations served by the Duluth Administration Center, many participants felt the program should be expanded rather than reduced. "Just when the program gets going good they talk about cutting it again," a participant from the Mille Lacs Reservation said.

For the third year the most popular course has been driver training. There is an immediate reward in passing the driver test and as a result a feeling of security. A thirty-two year old woman from Nett Lake put it this way: "I know how important the high school course is, but now I finally have my driver's license and it's the first time in my life I have felt good about driving to the store . . . my parents never had a driver's license, either, but none of us ever got caught . . . We always worried about it though."

There are still requests for courses in small engine repair on all the reservations and requests for courses in personal income tax and automobile repair for women. The stated need for courses in personal income tax indicates that more people are making enough money to worry about even filing a federal tax return.

Courses in anishinabe language have not been generally successful. While there is still a very strong interest and demand for courses in the language in most reservation communities, it has been difficult to find experienced instructors. Class attendance in anishinabe language courses has been poor. On the White Earth Reservation, for example, the language course ended up with only two white people and the instructor. Very often instructors were hired because they spoke the

language, and not because they had experience teaching the language. Problems of grammatical systems, orthography and variations in sound and structure of the language were seldom resolved by persons who only spoke the language. The courses in language may have been more successful if there had been some preparation of teachers: courses in anishinabe language should not be offered in the future until printed materials and tapes are available from Bemidji State College or the University of Minnesota.

Again this year on all reservations the problem of child care was more serious for participants taking courses in basic education and driver training than those who were taking courses in beadwork. The principal reason is the age of the participants. Most of the participants in the beadwork courses were older and their children were either away from home or old enough to care for themselves. Participants in basic education and driver training tended to be younger and have younger children who required care while the parents were taking courses or training.

Again this year, as was true last year, the mobility of younger parents was limited by young children who required care, while the mobility of older participants was more often limited by transportation. Older participants seldom owned automobiles.

Many participants suggested that there be programs for young people and children while parents are attending classes. This would eliminate the need for child care services and would also reduce to a certain extent transportation problems.

Driver training and adult basic education classes leading to the high school equivalency test are still the most popular. Because of

the success in high school equivalency tests many participants have gone on to college and vocational schools, who otherwise may have not thought about further education. And many participants who have completed the high school equivalency have found new and better jobs with more pay. On the Leech Lake Reservation five members of one family completed the high school equivalency. Two members of the family have gone on to study in college.

In the evaluation for the second year of the program it was recommended that the program be expanded to include courses in child development and psychology, basic foods and nutrition, personal income tax, treaty law and anishinabe foods and herbal medicine. Because the program has been reduced these courses were not offered.

The program should obviously be expanded to include new subject areas and experiences in education. The fact that more than three-hundred anishinabe people have passed the high school equivalency test means that people are interested in education. It also means that there are more and more high school graduates and college students in anishinabe families on the reservations. The effect can only be positive. More anishinabe people in college and vocational school may mean more students will finish high school.

After three years the energy of the participants in the program on all reservations is still high and the confidence in the Adult Basic Indian Education program has grown. Good things have happened to many people who have finished the courses in adult basic education.

Gerald Vizenor
July 1972
Bemidji, Minnesota